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SEA LANES

BURT
FRANKLIN
JENNESS

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SEA LANES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

MAN-O'-WAR RHYMES, $1.50

SEA LANES

AND OTHER POEMS

BURT FRANKLIN JENNESS

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TO MOTHER

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SEA LANES

SEA LANES

SEA LANES

There's a road that winds across the world,
  With never a home to left or right;
Where never a friendly smoke has curled
  Above a vagrant's fire at night,
And never the warmth of a gypsy camp,
  With shelter, and cup to quench the thirst;
Where never a man should choose to tramp
  But breaks his fetters of durance first.

The cross-roads lead to reach and rack;
  The by-paths end on many a shore,
And yet there's never a rut or track
  To tell who tramped the road before.

With never a milestone on the way,
  Or friendly tavern to greet the sight;
With only the sun to guide by day,
  And a single star, perhaps, at night.
It stretches away to meet the sky,
  This road that never ends at all,
And up where the meteors blaze and die
  It catches the star dust when they fall.

Beside this road, with never a breach,
  Are waving fields of tropic blue,
And stretching as far as the eye can reach
  The flowering crests of emerald hue,
With cool dark furrows that lie between,
  And like vast fields of cotton bloom
On slender stalks of watery green,
  The tossing combers blown with spume.

The lore of the road is free to all,
  For nature's book is there to read;
But woe to him that hears the call
  And takes the road — but does not heed—
For here is a wild and luring trail
  Leading away from the haunts of men;
Out to the home of the gull and the whale,
  And never leading back again.

THE WORLD OF SHIPS

I want to go back to the world of ships;
To the kicking seas where the salt sleet whips;
Where the flying spray will cling and freeze,
And a ten-inch stick will snap in the breeze;
Where a dog's a dog, and a man's a Jack,
Or a man's a cur if his deeds are black.
Just send me back to the world of ships,
Where a skipper knows his men.

I shipped for a cabin boy at ten,
My lot was cast with hairy men;
Grizzled and rough, but true as steel,
Wicked as Sin, but they were real,
The God they knew was the God of the sea,
And a creed like theirs will do for me.
So send me back to the world of ships,
For I'll know my billet then.

Send me aloft at brail and clew,
Lash me there 'tween blue and blue;
Send me below where the black gang heaves,
Where the pistons spit, and the crank-shaft grieves;
Send me on deck with bucket and swab;
Name the packet, and pick my job.
But send me back to the world of ships—
And I'll be happy again.

THE SEA TRAMP

A black hull is lifted on the lee;
She dips—and a strange tramp has passed;
A stately vagabond of the sea,
With lines unbeautiful, and bare of mast;
A ragamuffin on the road of ships;
A wanderer that's bidden to and fro,
To fetch and carry wares as fortune flips
The coin of trade, and tells her where to go.
Oft met at every cross-road of the sea,
And docked in all the ports of all the world;
A hobo, though the tramp ship be,
She holds respect of every flag unfurled.
Though dark of hull, unkempt, and stern and cold;
The barnacles of ages on her plates;
The dust from many countries in her hold,
And men of every nation for her mates,
Yet she may hail to-day from some far place,
And weather out the fiercest gale at sea,
To bring my lady perfume or fine lace,
Or serve her with the choicest brand of tea.
Her musty holds are redolent with scents
Of produce from her many ports of call;
Her being speaks of far off continents;
And an air of romance permeates it all.
What tales of daring might she not tell;
What tragedies of life before the mast;

How far the wanderlust might cast its spell—
Could she but speak the truth of cruises past!
Of duty vigils at the pumps at night;
Of mutiny nipped while yet in bud;
Of gaming crews in brawl by lantern light—
And now and then a murder in cold blood.
To-day she unloads coffee from Brazil;
Tomorrow takes on wheat for Liverpool;
Free-lancing 'round the globe at someone's will—
A tried and faithful ocean-going fool.
For twenty, thirty, fifty years, or more,
Though fouled by drift and weed of many seas,
She tips the horn of plenty at our door—
That those who scorn the tramp may live at ease.

EBB TIDES

As some well ordered life
Might pass its closing years
Above the seas of strife,
And ebbs and floods of tears,
The long, white, naked beaches,
Heat radiant, lie sunning,
While down their shining reaches
The listless ebb is running.

They bask with hot winds blowing
Their sands from crest to crest,
Until the flood tide flowing
Disturbs them at their rest.
The myriad bits of life,
That make their wastes less drear,
Are like the good deeds rife
In a desolate career.
The sea-urchins which bide
Their brief existence there;
The bi-valves, gaping wide
To take the balmy air;
The sand crab's patterned scrawl;
Are soon effaced by seas,
As pass beyond recall
Life's transient pleasantries.

The gusts of hot sand scurrying
On breezes soft and light,
Are like vague fancies hurrying
To reach ambition's height.
The drift the flood tides brought
Is on the sands outlined,
As derelicts of thought
Are strewn upon the mind.
The bits of wreckage smoothed
By touch of wind and wave,
Like fits of passion soothed
By words of counsel grave.
The strands of kelp, uprooted,
Are cast inland to dry,
Like fond hopes torn and looted
And left behind to die.

THE DERELICT

I tramp the golden roads of Here and There,
I'm numbered with the foot-loose and the free.
I court the life the gentler wouldn't dare.
I'm everything the nobler scorn to be.
I'm all the younger son should not have been,
The worst that hopeful parents used to fear.
I'm marked up with the ones that never win,
And running true to form with my career.
I'm one that brings the whisper in the pew,
The prayer for wayward ones upon the street,
The kind that barren missions beckon to,
And shame them down the saw-dust trail retreat.
The kind the goodly parson at the church
Warns his youthful congregation not to be;
That leaves his widowed mother in the lurch—
I'm the wilder son, who ran away to sea.

I'm elected to the Worthless Sailormen—
The world can tell you just what I will do—
Get drunk and ship; get paid, and ship again.
So I do all that I'm expected to.
I list a bit t' starb'ard when I walk,
My pegs are not as straight as years ago,
And I shift my quid to leeward when I talk,
But I take my trick and stand it, heel and toe.

I'm a relic of the Has Been, and the Was;
A remnant of the things that seemed to be;
A sorry jargon of effect and cause,
And I earn my daily bread upon the sea.
I chase the rainbows of the painted town;
I dicker with the fates, and many men;
I've had my fun, and paid the money down,
From Brest to Singapore and back again.
I've seen the sun go down on every sea,
I'm an advocate of sport for love of sport.
I'm a loafer with the Stevies on the quay,
Or I'll ship on any craft for any port.

THE SEAMAN'S HOUR

When the day's trick is over and the running lights
are lit,
And the rigging fore and aft is trim and tight;
When the evening watch is posted and the gear is
weather fit,
And the crew has gathered forward for the night,
And the smoking lamp is burning and the hammocks
there are swinging—
Then a man may know his shipmates as they are;
For the fellowship grows mellow with the songs the
gang is singing,
And the sailorman gets out his old guitar.

When the blue smoke is curling to the girders over-
head,
And the berth-deck is merry with the din
Of the laughter, song and story, ere the bugle blows
for bed—
Then the strains from the old guitar begin,
And you hear the pine trees whisper, out beneath
the stars alone,
Or the notes from famous concert halls afar,
Till he thrums and sets a-quiver every heart-string
with a tone—
When a shipmate plays upon his old guitar.

As he sits on his ditty box and smokes his cigarette
He will strike the chords that somehow set you wild;
For they conjure up the faces and the scenes you can't forget
Till the fragments of the world are 'round you piled;
Streets and restaurants and theatres; every rendezvous of town,
And the glamour of the life you left ashore.
He can lift you from the depths of thought or send you crashing down;
He can bring you hopes you never dreamed before;

He can make you forget that you ever learned to hate,
That you ever had a hurt to reconcile—
And you swing your hammock, happy, up along-side your mate—
When you've listened to his old guitar awhile,
And you take the road to slumber through the gates of memory,
As you watch, out through the port, some reeling star;
And you hear the distant beating of a swiftly running sea,
Like the music of a far away guitar.

THE FLOTILLA

Saucy pennants take the breeze;
The screech of sirens splits the air;
Aerials hum like swarming bees,
While on deck the bugles blare.
Heard above the busy din,
The rumbling winches gaining speed
Drag the dripping anchors in,
Fouled with mud and bottom weed.

Long, lean ships creep slowly out,
Jockeying with the channel tide,
Swinging their sleek hulls about
Till like partners, side by side,
In and out they seem to wind,
Circling, cutting in to fill,
Taking distances assigned,
Like some wonderful quadrille.

Smoke clouds trail like giant quills;
Sunset rays gild rail and spar
As dimly past the shadowed hills
The low ships wind across the bar.
A wavering line with specks of light;
An inky smoke screen blown to lee;
A column bulking in the night—
And our destroyers are at sea.

Bearing down, against the sky;
Bolting through the solid blue;
Bridging wave-crests mountain high;
Splitting giant seas in two.
Quaking when the head seas pound,
Weather cloth and bridge a-foam;
Glad of any holding ground;
Calling any port a home.

Slipping through a rugged reach;
Feeling over shoals of glass;
Flirting with a strip of beach;
Scouting up the nearest pass.
Dropping into port at night,
Underway before the dawn.
Graceful as a gull in flight,
Swifter than a startled fawn.

Out-posts of the mighty fleet;
Fingers of the battle craft;
Messengers of willing feet
In the world of fore and aft.
Convoy, freight, dispatch or mail;
Up to windward, down to lee,
The ocean hounds are on the trail
When the "Long Green" goes to sea.

THE SEA DOG

I wandered up and down the quay to-day,
And yesterday, and many days before.
In and out, aboard the ships I've found my way,
And tramped the sun-baked decks till I'm foot sore.
The shipping folks are mostly strange and queer,
And yet, sometimes an old familiar face
Will greet me from the decks or on the pier,
And then I know I'm in a friendly place.

I like to watch the freighters come and go;
The lazy tramps go easing down the bay;
The laden schooners straining at their tow,
And shaking out their canvas on the way.
I'm happy when the cargoes from the East
Fill the air with scent of spices and of fruit,
For the wealth of tree and jungle, bird and beast,
On the ships may tell the story of their route.

I dream of every port they touched or passed,
And I feel the tropic breezes blow once more.
I can tell just where they reefed or stepped a mast,
Or coasted by the lights along the shore.
I like to feel that I'm a part of it;
This great big open business of the sea,
That here's a place in life for which I'm fit;
That somewhere there's a ship that's needing me.

And so I wander up and down the pier,
And squat with sweating stevedores at noon.
Sometimes they'll share with me their grub and beer,
And talk old times outside the dock saloon.
Sometimes I'll board a tramp that's loading freight,
The biggest and the best that I can find,
And I'll tell a sailor's story to the mate—
And sometimes, but not often, he'll be kind.

Then again I'll meet a mate I used to know,
And he'll offer his tobaccy, and his hand;
And then he'll shake again, and off he'll go—
Talking low about the lucky dog on land.
But I don't mind their curses and their chaff;
Their sneering at the story I have told—
There's a harder blow that strikes home like a gaff,
For when I try to ship they say: "Too old."

BLUE WATER

I'm sick of the world that men have made;
Their baubles of fashion; their color and glare.
I'm sick of their tawdry street parade;
Their crowded shops, and the stifling air;
Their reeking slums, and the life at night;
The dust of their cities is choking me;
I'm sick of deceit, and the sham in their fight—
And I'm going back to the open sea.

Just give me a ship with a happy crew,
And deep blue water beneath her keel;
Her bilges tight, and her compass true;
A trusty mate to mind the wheel —
And winds may blow till the lee rail dips!
A God made world is the world for me;
Untrammelled, and peopled by men of the ships—
So I'm going back to the open sea.

THE SPORTSMAN

He who knows the keen delight
  Which campin'-out time brings,
Who loves the crackling fire at night;
  The song the kettle sings;
Who's sipped the nectar from a pot
  Of fragrant coffee steaming;
Or tentward wafted to his cot,
  To wake him from his dreaming,
The smell of bacon in the pan,
  Or flap-jacks in the turning;
Who yearns to be an out-door man—
  And satisfies his yearning;
A sportsman who can rough it right,
  And though his bones are aching,
Can sleep beneath the stars at night,
  And glory in the waking—
That man has lived to play a game
  All other games are worth;—
He has a better right to claim
  His heritage of earth.

He who knows the great out-doors
  Of desert, woods or shore,
Who knows the wealth of nature's stores;
  Who knows her lure, and lore;

Who's pitched his tent and sought his rest
In God's great camping place;
Who's scaled the peaks, or plunged to breast
The stream where torrents race;
Who's followed sledge and mushed the trail
Behind the yelping pack;
Who's clung aloft to reef a sail,
Or trailed the panther's track;
Who's stood a watch on reeling bridge,
Or braved the mesa's heat;
Who's tramped the woods and climbed the ridge,
And packed his kill of meat—
That man is every inch a man,
His feet have felt the sod;
He's lived where only such men can—
A little nearer God.

THE BUSINESS OF SAILING

When nights are cold and dark, and seas are pounding
loud as thunder;
The trades are shrieking over, and the bow is plunging under;
The man who's made his business the business of the
sea
Must stand to it behind the wheel — the devil take
the lee —

When stiff with sleet his oil-skins rasp and crackle
as he sways,
And the icy rain that pelts his lashes freezes while
it stays—
'Tis then he'll curse the sailing business up and down
the main,
And dub himself the prince of fools to take a ship
again.

When a man has quit the sailing of the seas, and
harbored snug
Among the hills, with trees so thick you couldn't
hoist a lug;
When the line of his horizon shuts the ocean out of
view,
And his course is straight and narrow, and his mates
are mighty few;

He'll chafe against the docking lines, and feel them drawing tight,
For his soul is straining seaward, and his heart is in the bight —
There is dearth of real contentment in that world of hills and trees,
For the man who made a business once of sailing on the seas.

THE SURFMAN

The surfman takes his dreary post
To bide the night, while storm seas roar
And charge against a rocky coast—
Till fury spent, they flood the shore.
He knows the signs of peril rife
On such a sea — and ere the dread
North Eastern gale has lived its life,
He'll count its toll of shipwrecked dead.

His lantern bright and his rockets ready,
He keeps his vigil the wild night through;
His step is firm and his hand is steady,
Though ghastly work is his to do.
Beneath his low sou'wester's brim
He sweeps the sea with anxious eye,
And scans the dark for signals grim;
A blazing rocket against the sky;

A burning mast or a beacon light.
His ear is bent for a siren's shriek,
And through the void of sea and night,
He harkens for a ship to speak.
His being shrinks from the cold without,
But stout must be the heart within—
For swift is the foe that he would rout,
And fierce the battle that he must win.

His oilskins shed the beating storm,
But little he knows of mirth and song.
With coursing blood to keep him warm—
But none to cheer — he swings along
And dreams, perhaps, of the revelry
And scenes afar from his lonely strand—
But wakes to the voice of an angry sea,
And his own foot-steps in the heavy sand.

THE TRYST

The Light:

O keeper, trim my lanterns well;
  My crystal faces polish bright.
How goes the watch, no one can tell,
  When seamen fail to lift my light.
The night is dark; the storm's forecast
  I see in turbulent unrest
Of oily swells, and rising fast,
  The storm seas beating at my breast.
O keeper, leave no work undone;
  I must not fail to light the way.
'Tis long before another sun—
  And who can tell what brings the day?
The Ocean Mail is due to-night;
  The storm speeds on behind the mist;
Our pact is sealed, and with my light
  I must not fail to keep the tryst.

The Ship:

O Captain, make your vigil true;
  My cruising lights keep burning bright,
The Shoal Light knows that we are due,
  And I've a tryst with him to-night.
The storm is pounding us a-beam;

My plates are strained with every list;
The seas are testing every seam;
My shaft is wrenched with every twist.
O Captain, keep your lookouts keen,
And batten down my hatches tight.
The sea wolves follow, lank, and lean—
We must not miss the beacon light.
The keeper watches in the tower;
The storm has beaten down the mist;
The Shoal Light knows it is my hour—
I must not fail to keep the tryst.

THE "CALLAO PAINTER"

Silent artist of the sea;
Tell us why this mystery;
Never brush or palette near,
When your canvasses appear,
Yet no novice daub or smirk
Is your clever handiwork.
Through the darkened leagues we know
Is your deep sea studio,
But your silent, locked estate
Science cannot penetrate.
You, Aladdin's power hold,
Or, the Midas touch of gold,
When from utter depths you steal,
And with magic wand, a keel
Stroke, and Lo! a leaden hue;
Callao Painter, who are you?

Callao Painter, tell us, pray,
From whence comes your pigment gray?
Plant or fish, or mineral salt
Acting on the cruiser's vault;
Juice of kelp or ink of squid,
Or is your great secret hid
In the soft aurelia's cells?
Shall we say the grantia's pores
Can secrete that paint of yours?

Or the hydroid and his kin,
Do they excrete lead or tin?
Is your art by science taught,
Is your work by nature wrought,
Or are you a water witch?
Are you myth or mortal — which?
Mystery of old Peru,
Callao Painter, what are you?

THE ALL-ROUND MAN

Give me the man who'll take a chance
When other men would quit;
Who'll break the bonds of circumstance
And win out by his grit;
Who dares to leave the beaten track,
Or stay against his will;
Give me the man who has the knack
Of being versatile.
Give me the man who's at his ease
A-field, with gun and dogs;
Yet who can grace the realm of teas,
Or don his evening togs
And play a role — at opera, dance,
Reception, or the club —
Par Excellence among gallants;
A man who's not a dub
At golf or bridge; who likes to dwell
Within the world of books;
Knows wine and women, not too well,
And loves the song of brooks.
Of all the men who tramp the earth
In life's great caravan;
Of high or low or gentle birth,
Give me the all-round man.

DRIFTWOOD

I watched a piece of driftwood on the tide,
A thing deserving but a passing glance,
Yet idly on the waves I saw it ride
At the mercy of the sea; a thing of chance,
Until the breakers cast it at my feet,
And as it lay there I soliloquized:
Was such a tragic end, a just defeat,
Or had it been a thing which men had prized?

Perhaps a timber in a mighty craft;
A rudder-head, a broken spar, a mast;
The wreckage from an over laden raft;
Or somewhere in the dim forgotten past,
A giant pillar standing in the flood,
Where human traffic roared above the tide;
Or a stalwart pile up-ended in the mud,
Beneath a dock where trains of commerce plied.

Grown gray with barnacles and pearly shells;
Replete with ocean's chambered mysteries;
The thing was bearded with the drift that tells
Of vagabonding in many seas.
But had it mutely played a vital part
In schemes of men, in days beyond recall,
And though inanimate, had it a heart,
Or was it only driftwood — after all?

A sterner object drifted through the spray,
Riding heavy, like a ship in storm,
And as the thing came nearer in the bay
It took on semblance of the human form.
Across the billows, lying prostrate;
Rising slowly on a foamy crest;
Sinking in a trough with leaden weight,
Until upon the sands it lay at rest.

The guards attended that which once was man,
And strove to bring anew the breath of life.
And as they did their work I tried to scan
His face for lines of pleasure or of strife;
To fathom his life secret there in death;
To learn the fatal road by which he came;
If cowardice or valor checked his breath,
And where and how and why he played the game.

But only staring eyes looked up at mine,
And only swollen lips which could not tell,
And on his stolid face was not a line
To say if life with him went ill or well.
And as they raised and carried him away
I wondered — did his hand offend a brother;
Was his life success or failure, sad or gay;
Or was he only driftwood — like the other?

UP ANCHOR

There is romance in a sailing; there's adventure on the sea,
For the slipping of a hawser sets the careless seamen free,
And a world fades out behind them and another looms ahead
Every time a screw is churning or a mainsail's spread;
Trysts and promises are broken, fame and fortune cast away;
Tears may fall upon the harbor, where a loved ship lay,
But it's "All hands for'rd!" and it's "Fore sheet; haul!"
And it's "Stand by, me hearties!" when the sailors hear the call,
"All hands, up anchor!"

Oh, how bright the combers glisten and how clear the headlands are
When we're homeward bound and standing out beyond the harbor bar;
How the scudding clouds, reflected, chase the whitecaps up the sea,
And the seagulls' noisy convoy seems to leave reluctantly;

How the throbbing screws, in chorus, seem to sing
the joy we feel,
As they race and pound and rumble through the
leagues beneath our keel;
How the morning's routine lightens when we clear
our holdin' ground;
How we man the hoistin' tackle when we hear that
welcome sound,
"All hands, up anchor!"

There are songs of home and country, there are hails
that thrill and cheer;
There are customs and traditions which to every
man are dear;
There are memories which hold us in a spell of
ecstasy;
There are thoughts which seem to bind us until others
set us free;
But the song with deepest meaning, in the world that
seamen know,
Brings them mingled joy and sorrow as it bids them
come or go,
For it's "All hands aft!" and it's "Main sheet, haul!"
And it's "Stand by, me hearties!" when the sailors
hear the call,
"All hands, up anchor!"

LOOKING SEAWARD

I wonder what lies over there,
Where sea and heavens meet;
The place where golden sunsets flare,
And lay their jewelled street
Across the billows back to me,
Until sometimes I think
I'll take that path across the sea,
And just peek o'er the brink
Of that abyss which welcomes all
Who cross its dim threshold.
I wonder what strange haunts enthrall,
Beyond that rim of gold,
The countless hordes that sail away
To lands for which they yearn —
But whose kin watch for many a day
In vain for their return.

I wonder where the white ships go,
That sail against the sky.
I wonder if I'll ever know
The mysteries that lie,
Or romances of those who dwell
Beyond that stretch of blue.
I wonder if the tales they tell
Of foreign lands are true;

If green fringed atolls dip their strands
Beneath the turquoise seas,
And palm strewn beaches cool their sands
On every tropic breeze;
If wondrous castle walls still ring
With chivalrous tales of old,
And over crumbling ruins cling
The ivy and the mold;
I wonder in my dreams, if I
On some swift cloud set sail,
With some low star to steer her by,
My craft would reach that pale
Whose endless wall the sun and stars
Traverse in mystery,
And through whose mist the glint of spars
Oft comes and goes at sea.

SEA LONGINGS

I'd rather ride the billows high,
Or buck the trades with empty hold,
Than scale the peaks that touch the sky,
Or tramp the woods of green and gold.

I'd rather have my choice of ships
And steer her by the palest star,
Than bide the stares and painted lips
That revel where the bright lights are.

I'd rather feel the biting spray,
Blown bridge-ward from a slaked jib-boom,
Than hear the gossip of the day
Within the stately drawing room.

I'd rather see a sunset die
At sea beneath the Southern Cross,
Than turn the lamp of life too high
And share the gamblers' nightly loss.

I'd rather know the men on decks,
Of shifting quid and stubble beard,
Than all the city's pallid wrecks,
Of riches born and gentry reared.

THE SUMMER STORM

I leave the path by drift and dune
And turn my face to the open sea;
My heart's apace with the waves' dull tune,
And something stirs in the soul of me.

The white-caps change to oily swells;
In the offing ships are shortening sail;
The warning cry of the gull foretells
The coming of a summer gale.

A cloud bank hangs where the sun went down;
The harbor lights are sifting through
A dull gray mist which hides the town.
The off-shore wind springs up a-new;
The harbor craft are taking lee;
The twilight turns to a darker gray —
A silence falls on land and sea —
Then rain clouds drive the mist away;

The angry seas are flung inland;
The pebbles threshed in the under-tow;
The breakers pound, and the shifting sand
Is flecked with spume like driven snow.
I steel myself to the stiffening breeze
And briskly walk the clean washed shore.

I'm wet with spray from the lurching seas;
My foot-steps grind on the hard beach floor;

My chosen way is the tempest's way;
My soul's attuned to the old gray sea;
I walk the beach on a stormy day —
And nature sings in the heart of me.

SEA MUSING

If I could have chosen the place of my birth,
And fashioned my cradle near by,
And built from the beauties of all the earth
A bower in which to lie;
My life would have stirred to the cool caress
Of a salt spray kissing me;
My cradle have swung with the gentleness
Of a summer breeze at sea.

If I had the choice of a spot to dwell
And foster the business of life,
I'd flee from the marts where the pulses swell
In the heat of the cities' strife,
And follow the men who can stand to the wheel
In the teeth of a blow at sea;
I'd brother the breed of the deep sea keel,
And share their destiny.

Should I have the choice of a place in the sun
When old age comes to me,
Where I may rest when my work is done,
I'll wait beside the sea.
If I had the choice of a place to die
I'd choose some rocky shore,
With a humble home, and friends near by,
And the sound of the breakers' roar.

A FOG AT SEA

A world oppressed by dearth of life and light;
A universe of water and of mists
Without sun to cheer the day, or stars the night;
A sphere wherein no moving thing exists
Except the rise and fall of some lone ship,
Riding blindly through a dank eternity,
With but the music of her measured dip
To break the silence of a fog bound sea.

The shrouded waves seem listless and depressed,
Devoid of spectral hues which give them life.
The low gray swells in sinuous unrest
Rise, but to fall, the weaker for their strife.

No living thing is seen upon the crests;
The finny tribes avoid the bleakness there,
The sea birds seek their far Sargasso nests
And shun the sadness of the humid air.
The night descends, but not unlike the day,
Save the bank of mist has changed to darker hue,
And Stygian seas dissolving those of gray
Proclaim a world where all is lost to view.

A siren's blast intensifies each lull;
The moaning of a buoy sounds somewhere;

Its plaintive tones too muffled and too dull
To wake an echo on the heavy air.
The search-light's steely gleams reach pale and cold,
Where castle walls of fog their rays resist,
And like the weapons hurled by knights of old,
They shatter on the parapets of mist.

SOUTH OF FIFTY-THREE

The roughest jack who's sniffed a breeze
Behind a channel fog;
The toughest tar on seven seas
That ever stood the "dog,"
Are gentlemen, and highly bred,
Whatever manner born —
Who reverence, alive or dead,
The men who sailed the Horn!

So skippers all, hear my appeal,
And lay aft all your men;
And bare your heads, and let us feel
They're on the seas again —
And choose what form of praise you may,
But speak it from the heart —
And say not less of them, than they
Were masters of their art.

LOST AT SEA

The mighty fleet in sombre gray,
Majestic, silent, ploughed its way,
When from a lookout's post somewhere
Rang out upon the evening air
The sea's most terrifying word;
"Man overboard"!— no sooner heard,
Than down the cruisers' column went
The word by life-buoy watches sent —
Then bugles sounded! signals flashed!
The life-boats, ready, hung unlashed,
And crews were mustered at each boat —
No sooner manned than put afloat —
Then toward the life-buoy's lurid light
A dozen life-boats cut the night;
A dozen crews bent o'er a task
No man aboard would dare to ask
A respite from, or question when
His oars would come to rest again.

Aloft, the searchlights' gleaming light
Pierced the chasm of the night;
Among the crews no word was said;
With hopeful vigilance, yet dread,
They circled 'round the drifting light;

The dark abyss of sea and night
They searched, in vain, for any sign,
Accidental, or by design,
Which struggling life might give to them,
Or drifting dead might bring to them —
A watchful hour passed, and then,
Aloft the signals flashed again;
Bugles sounded boat recall;
Then muster-roll, and that was all —
The mighty fleet in sombre gray,
Majestic, silent, went its way.

KINDRED SHIPS

My soul is where the gray ships are;
My truant heart is on the sea;
Hull-down beyond the harbor bar
My white sailed thoughts are running free;
And if the winds blow foul or fair,
Or white shoals glisten beneath their lee,
I'm part of the life of things out there —
And all the ships are akin to me.

I know the strength of bolt and bar
In the towering hulls of pulsing steel;
The life that sparks from mast and spar,
And the language of each vibrant keel.
I know the feel of a beam-sea kick;
I've manned the yards to a frozen sheet;
There's life for me in a steering trick,
And I've laughed through the gale at the biting sleet.

There's a deep sea roll in the legs of me;
My ears are attuned to the breakers' roar;
I'm akin to the ships, for I've served the sea —
And my heart goes out to the world off-shore.

SONGS OF THE FO'C'S'LE

SHIPMATES

Don't y' sometimes get t' wishin'
  Fer th' good old days at sea,
Can't y' hear th' bow waves swishin',
An' th' windward scuppers dishin'
  Seas she took so handsomely?

Don't y' sometimes get t' thinkin'
  Of th' sights an' sounds aboard,
Can't y' see th' signals blinkin',
Can't y' hear th' mess gear clinkin'
  When th' coffee's bein' poured?

Can't y' feel y' thoughts go boundin'
  Back t' some forgotten cruise,
Can't y' hear th' leadsmen soundin',
Can't y' hear th' beam seas poundin'
  An' th' rumblin' of th' screws?

Don't y' seem t' jest be clingin'
  T' th' pals of long ago,
Can't y' hear their voices ringin',
Can't y' hear th' gang a-singin'
  All th' songs y' used t' know?

Don't y' dream o' strange old places,
That y' used t' visit then,
See th' customs of odd races,
An' look into shipmates' faces
That y'll never meet again?

Can y' keep th' thoughts from comin'
When a ship gets under way,
Or y' hear some lad a-hummin'
Marchin' tunes, or hear th' drummin'
An' th' band begins t' play?

Can y' keep th' lump from swellin'
In y' throat at fleet parade,
Don't y' feel like up an' yellin'
When th' crews go by, an' tellin'
Them y' kinda wish y'd stayed?

THE OLD SCUTTLE-BUTT

How dear to my heart are the scenes of my cruises,
When fond recollection presents them to view.
Not one of those dreams of the fo'c's'le loses
The charm of each spot that my rookie days knew.
The sound of the bugle at reveille routing
The crew from the hammocks which hung neck an' neck;
The din of the mess-gear; the laughing and shouting
Around the old scuttle-butt, there on the deck.
The old wooden scuttle-butt;
Iron bound scuttle-butt;
Cool, dripping scuttle-butt, on the gun-deck.

The songs that the gang used to sing in the twilight,
Their pipes all a-glowin' with yellow and red,
Just layin' on deck till the last bit o' sky light
Had gone, where the sun was hull-down and abed.
The faces which peered above every tin dipper;
The laughter that rang as we leaned at the brink;
The hails that were cheery, the jokes that were chipper,
The fellowship there, which we quaffed with each drink
From the old wooden scuttle-butt;
Iron bound scuttle-butt;
Cool, dripping scuttle-butt, on the gun-deck.

SHAKIN' DOWN

I c'n see 'em at inspection,
Like th' scene wuz yesterday;
Awkward squads from ev'ry section
All on deck in bright array.
I c'n hear th' orders hummin'!
Layin' out th' work t' do —
Things on board wuz up an' comin'!
Shakin' down th' rookie crew.

Guardo sailors, an' Cob-dockers
Barrack seamen by th' score;
Fresh as their new-painted lockers,
Greener than th' grass ashore
When it come t' deep-sea sailin'!
But b'fore th' cruise wuz through
We wuz trim from peak to railin'—
Shakin' down th' rookie crew.

They wuz never where they should be;
They wuz always loafin' aft;
They wuz soft as lubbers could be
When they come aboard th' craft.
They wuz white, an' kinda scrawny,
But we took an' put 'em through,
An' we made 'em hard an' brawny —
Shakin' down th' rookie crew.

They'd come stragglin' out fer drillin',
An' their gear wuz stiff an' new;
They wuz victims of th' grillin'
By th' old ones in th' crew,
But they stood th' trainin' racket,
An' they come back seamen too,
When we sailed on our old packet —
Shakin' down th' rookie crew.

ANCHOR WATCHES

Ever stood th' twelve t' four
Anchor watch, alone at night,
When th' lights along th' shore
Were jes' blinkin' out o' sight?
Ever leaned there on th' railin'
Jes' b'fore th' night wuz run,
Stood an' watched th' stars a-palin'
Till they dropped out one by one?

Ever felt th' old craft swingin'
Till th' chains 'ud grind an' slip?
All y' toes an' fingers stingin'
Where th' off-shore wind 'ud nip;
Water gurglin', deep an' black,
'Round th' bow, an' sorta drippin'
An' a-sloshin' up an' back
Where th' windward drains wuz dippin'.

Watch cap pulled about yer ears,
Pea coat buttoned snug an' tight;
What strange thoughts an' hopes an' fears
Used t' come on watch at night!
Ever felt so blamed alone
That it seemed like, fore an' aft,
Every spar an' mast had grown
Into some great spectre craft?

Ever been so cold an' sleepy
Y' could hardly walk yer post?
Ever felt so scared an' creepy
Every stanchion wuz a ghost,
An' it seemed like ev'ry creakin'
Of th' decks 'ud let y' through,
An' that bosuns' mates wuz sneakin'
In th' shadows watchin' you?

Ever heard th' gulls a-screamin'
At th' first gray peep o' dawn,
Ever find y'self a-dreamin'
Jes' b'fore eight bells had gone?
Ever feel y' thoughts, now, throngin'
Back t' things that happened then,
Ever find y'self jes' longin'
Fer an anchor watch again?

BUMBOATS

I've had a whirl at games of chance
From Bombay 'round to Cork,
I've sensed the ways of high finance
In little old New York;
I know the way a bargain's made
In Continental marts,
Where crafty merchants vie for trade
And practice cunning arts;
But when I call them back to mind,
I make a solemn vow —
There's only one of all their kind
Could sell me something now.
There's only one that ever can
Bring pleasant thoughts to me —
And that's the little bumboatman,
Who paddles out to sea;
With his: "Gotta nice ripa banan,
You buy da beeg orange? he sweet!
Gotta cigarette; lika da fan?
You lika da fine parakeet? "

O, how we watched them coming out,
At first they looked like specks,
Just creeping down the bay, and 'bout
The time we'd scrubbed down decks,

They'd be a-hovering 'round like gulls —
  Just waiting for "mess gear,"
The band would play, and in the lulls
  We'd call the bumboats near,
And on the wonders in each boat
  We'd feast our hungry eyes,
And as the little craft would float,
  We'd bargain for a prize;
Coral, shells, and blow-fish, dried,
  And fruit, and Guava jell,
And nuts, and gum, and dried snake hide,
  And lace, and tortoise shell —
Then 'twas "Gotta nice ripa banan,
  You buy da beeg orange? he sweet!
Gotta cigarette; lika da fan?
  You lika da fine parakeet? "

No, you may have your gilded shops,
  Their tinsel and their glare;
The scent of sandalwood, and hops,
  And incense burning there;
Your money-changers, lottery sharks,
  And sleek rug merchant's guise;
Your hounding guides around the parks,
  And curb stock broker's lies —
The bumboatmen are not the breed
  That squat in Europe's mart,
They barter for their daily need —
  Deceit is not their art.

If there's reward for toil and strife,
When comes the final summing,
In cheering up a sailor's life —
Bumboaters have it coming;
With their: "Gotta nice ripa banan,
You buy da beeg orange? he sweet!
Gotta cigarette; lika da fan?
You lika da fine parakeet? "

HEROES

Attention! Doughboys, Engineers,
Aero, Tanks and Cavaliers;
You guys with medals on your breasts,
And Service stripes, throw out your chests!
You done us proud, and you can tell
The folks at home why war is hell.
But Halt! You land fighters, enough!
Don't corner all the hero stuff;
The world knows how you scaled the top;
That nothing short of hell could stop
Your tanks and planes and gas attacks.
There's nothing that your valor lacks —
But while we talk of fighting jobs,
Have you guys heard about the Gobs?
I mean the web-feet on our ships,
A little bunch that sometimes slips
Your minds, when you trench diggers run
The gamut of the deeds you've done;
You faced barrage and gas and shell,
You done the job — and done it well,
But could you lads have faced it all
Without the ground on which to fall?

THE MYSTERY

I'm back on my old job again; the boss has raised my pay.
I've donned "civilians," and I've put my uniform away.
The folks are proud because their son has done his bit at sea,
And everybody 'round the house is happy — except me.
There's something I don't understand, about this coming home.
For when I should be most content, my thoughts begin to roam,
And when I light my cigarette, I seem to see the gang
Up for'rd on the fo'c's'le, and hear the songs they sang.
When I'm awakened by a voice, I think it's not for me,
And I turn over for a nap, and wait for reveille.
And 'round the steaming coffee every morning, now, there clings
The memories of mess time, and all the joy it brings
When a fellow comes off morning watch, with not a bite since four,
And cold and drenched — and his relief a half hour late, or more.

The wind that howls around the house, but brings
delight to me,
For I can hear the creak of gear, and racing screws
at sea.
The sleet which cut my face today, as I walked into
town,
I fought, in fancy, on the bridge, where I paced up
and down.
There's something strange about the way I dream,
now, on the job,
And stranger still, that I should long to be once more,
a gob.

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

They're minute men of Uncle Sam;
They never ask — nor give a damn —
What kind o' job is theirs — nor where;
Give 'em the order — and they are there!
Quick on the trigger, and fight on the run —
For every man is a son-of-a-gun —
With Uncle Sam's Marines.

They're hard-shelled cusses, and full o' grit;
They're seasoned, and nervy, and battle-fit;
Shoulder to shoulder, and hand to hand,
They're first at sea and first to land;
At home in the trenches, or with the fleet —
And they'll take death before defeat —
The United States Marines.

THE HOLYSTONER

Swashin' down th' quarter-deck, scuppers runnin' free,
All th' gang in workin' white, happy as c'n be;
Smell o' coffee comin' through from th' galley, near,
Gettin' keener fer th' mess, ev'ry sound we hear;
Mornin' watch a-swappin' yarns that they got ashore,
Ev'ry guy with somethin' new 'bout th' night before.

Smokes a-workin' overtime, makins' hard t' find,
Jeans rolled up aroun' our knees, blouses left b'hind;
Rus'lin' out th' cleanin' gear, draggin' aft th' hose,
Sloshin' 'round t' feel th' sand oozin' 'tween our toes;
Legs a tinglin' from th' spray, dancin' 'round with glee,
Holystonin' with th' gang — that's th' watch fer me.

Sun a-peepin' from th' sea out across th' bay,
Fishermen a-makin' sail, gettin' under way;
Gulls a-whinin' overhead, lookin' fer their chow,
Bumboatmen a-comin' out, driftin' 'round th' bow;
Ship a-swingin' to th' tide, chains a-drawin' tight,
Deck a-wash, th' sand an' water shinin' in th' light;

Gang a-singin', fore an' aft, songs of ev'ry kind,
Holystones a-slidin' — slidin' with a merry grind;
Wadin' 'round in sand an' slush, slippin' on th' deck,
Tiltin' up th' hose a bit to'ards a rookie's neck;
Ev'rybody soppin' wet, hungry as c'n be,
Holystonin' with th' gang — that's th' life fer me.

THE MEAL PENNANT

I've knocked about the world, an' had most every
kind o' job,
An' when we went t' fightin', I enlisted as a gob.
I wasn't in no battles, an' I wear no hero bars;
But I done my duty cheerful, with a thousand other
tars.
An' now the thing is over, an' I've hit the trail again,
There's lots o' things looks different than I used t'
see 'em, then;
An' when I get t' dreamin' of the times I've had at
sea,
There's something' in the old routine looks better,
now, t' me
Than anything they hand me out, in this 'ere life
ashore,
An' that's the old meal pennant that was flyin' at
the "fore".
I never was partic'lar, fer I'm jest a workin' guy;
An' I've hoboed fer a livin' in the days gone by,
But since the war was over, I've been driftin' with
th' tide.
The jobs are like they used t' be — but I ain't satis-
fied;
It's hustle this, an' rustle that, fer sixteen hours a
day;

It's check me in, an' check me out, an' argue fer my pay;
They call me on the carpet — then it's lock step, or rout —
Fer if I have a word t' say, the boss he pipes me out.
I've had my fill o' civil life — 'n' I ain't been out a year —
I'm ready fer th' fo'c's'le, an' all th' shippin' gear.
I'll holy-stone th' fightin' top before a howlin' gale;
An' bosuns' mates can cuss me out an' I will never wail;
The other guys can hit the beach, but none fer this one, when
The old meal pennant's callin' — fer I'm goin' t' ship again.

"JIMMY LEGS"

"Jimmy Legs" your cruise is ended,
You are stricken from the list;
Soon your deeds will all be blended,
Like a gray hull in the mist,
With those old, but fond traditions,
And odd customs of the sea,
And the story of your missions
Will be only history.

Though a rough and ready master
With an arm like tempered steel,
And an eye that travelled faster
Than the scud beneath our keel;
Though the terror of the rookie,
And the bane of the marines;
Though the worry of the "cookie,"
And star actor in the scenes

From the fo'c's'le to quarter
Deck, from bridge to stoking hold—
Leading shirkers to the slaughter,
Meting punishment untold—
Though your specialty was taming
All the rookie pugilists,
And you stopped our quiet gaming
With a lecture—or your fists!

Though you gave us gentle warnings
Till we wished that we could die;
Though you stormed the berth deck, mornings,
With a typhoon in your eye;
Though you merited profaning,
And deserved it when we'd curse —
"Jimmy Legs" we'll miss your training,
For we may get something worse!

PAY DAY

When I get t' thinkin' o' some o' th' ways
O' life aboard ship in th' old cruisin' days,
An' try t' pick out o' th' times we had then
Th' one that I'd ruther see come back again,
As I pictur' th' cruises, an' all their routine
Goes by, like my mind wuz a real movie screen,
I sez t' meself; "Y' can cuss all th' rest,
But th' routine o' pay day's th' one ye liked best."

There wuz days when th' rookies shook down fer a trip;
An' days when we painted — (jes' 'fore we coaled ship).
There wuz days when we laid all our duds out in rows
Fer inspection — (jes' 'fore we'd have "scrub an wash clothes").
There wuz field days, when all hands wuz up t' th' neck
In dungarees, paint, an' th' gear 'round th' deck —
(Sech corkin' good days 't be all mustered aft,
Er turn to an' try out th' life savin' craft.)

There wuz never a day when th' gang wasn't game,
From reveille through t' when hammock time came;
When a square-headed bosun 'ud cuss out th' crew,

There wuz never a guy on th' ship 'ud get blue.
We reckoned th' cruises in months, an' a butt,
An' bragged t' th' gang o' th' short time we'd got;
We wuz happy-go-lucky, as long as we stayed —
But th' days we liked best wuz th' days we got paid.

SWIMMIN' CALL

How th' boys 'ud dance an' shout
When they heard th' swimmin' call!
'Fore th' anchor chains wuz out
Y'could hear th' boat booms fall,
Then we'd rustle gang-way gear,
Both ears open, till we heard
That old call we loved t' hear.
Time th' bosun passed th' word.
We'd be half undressed I guess —
Didn't need no drill at all
T'show up our speediness
When we heard th' swimmin' call.

How that old berth deck 'ud ring
Jest before a swimmin' bout!
All th' gang 'ud whoop an' sing
Till th' mate 'ud pipe us out.
"Slap-stick," "Leap-frog," "Catch-as-can,"
"Highland fling," an' "Touch-an'-go,"
'Round th' old berth deck we ran
Till our eyes jes' seemed t' glow.
Then th' tussle 'ud b'gin,
An' we'd fight fer elbow room;
Keen t' be th' first one in —
"Be th' first guy off th' boom!"

How th' salt spray'd sting our faces,
An' our hearts jest seemed t' thrill,
As we warmed up t' th' races,
Or we jockeyed in th' spill.
How we dived, an' splashed, an' mingled
In a free-for-all race in,
Till our bodies they jest tingled,
Where th' salt seas lashed our skin.
O, th' swims I've had since then —
Y'can bet I'd give 'em all
Jest t' join th' gang again,
An' t' hear their swimmin' call.

"LAY AFT"

'Member how you'd get t' diggin'
Into some mean job b'low;
Breakin' out th' coalin' riggin',
Cleanin' up a dynamo,
Pumpin' bilges er repairin'
Engine room er steerin' gears?
An' y' somehow wasn't carin'
Fer th' paint an' oily smears
On y' face an' dungarees,
An' th' grease wuz thick an' slimy
On y' elbows an' y' knees,
An' y' felt s' black an' grimy
That th' outfit y' wuz wearin'
'Ud disgrace a coalin' craft —
Then you'd leave th' job jes' swearin'
'Cause y' heard th' call; "Lay Aft."

'Member how you'd get s' tired
Y' could hardly work y' feet,
An' y' felt like you wuz mired
In th' job b'fore retreat,
An' y' had t' almost crawl
Back t' get cleaned up a bit,
An' y' thought th' only call
That 'ud ever make y' fit,

Would be when they sounded taps,
An' y' felt like turnin' in
Fer a "forty-eight" o' naps —
'Member how you'd kind o' grin,
An' y' heart 'ud give a bound,
When o' sudden through th' craft
Rang th' old f'miliar sound;
"All you shore leave men lay aft."

"CHIPS"

When y' look about an' try to
Pick a shipmate fer th' cruise,
That'll be a friend t' tie to
When y' kinda get th' blues;
When y' want a mate that's ready
With a friendship that's alive,
All his dealin's square an' steady,
An' he don't want six fer five;
When y' want an open hearted
Mate — that hasn't got a spleen —
An' y' know that what he's started
Will be sure t' come through clean;
When y' want a pal that's livin'
With a good word on his lips,
An'll take less than he's givin' —
Then th' guy y' want is "CHIPS!"

Can't y' almost see th' boys
'Round th' bench where old "Chips" stood,
Don't y' recollect th' toys
That he'd make o' bits o' wood?
Don't y' recollect him mendin'
Ever'thing, from broken locks
To a deck swab, or his sendin'
You a fancy ditty box?

When y' mind is sorta castin'
'Mong th' thoughts of long ago,
Fer a mem'ry that is lastin'
Of th' mates y' used t' know,
Y' will find him overhaulin'
All th' others on th' ships —
An' y' mind has gone a-trawlin'
If y' don't remember "CHIPS".

THE SEA LAWYER

Learnéd seers of ancient ages;
Oracles or wisest sages—
Our sea lawyer beats them all.
From "All Hands" to hammock call,
Always ready for debate,
Captain, cook or bosun's mate
Has no chance when he begins;
In the game of talk — he wins!
Talks long after lights are out,
Don't need much to talk about,
Talks himself right out of jobs;
Pesters all his fellow gobs;
Argued with the Doc., they say,
Which side his appendix lay.
Talks the whole berth deck to sleep,
Arguing on how to keep
Politicians free from graft,
Or marines from loafing aft;
How to make a berth deck cook;
Run a farm, or write a book;
Knows the charts of every sea;
Man or beast or bird or tree;
Things that walk or swim or crawl —
Our sea lawyer knows them all.

"MAIL, HO!"

All th' sounds I've heard at sea
Can't compare with one for me,
It's got all th' others beat
Clean from "All Hands" to "Retreat;"
Gets me — riggin', hull an' all,
When I hear th' bosun call:
"Mail, Ho!"

When th' tender heaves in sight,
Any time o' day or night;
Rollin' in a rough sea-way,
Or she's steaming' up th' bay,
Never was a craft a-float
Looked s'good as that mail boat.
Brightest days of any cruise
Are th' days we get th' news,
Makes no odds t'us which way
We are bound on letter day;
Always have a happy crew
On th' day th' mail is due.
'Round th' berth deck then, is where
Most of us hang out, an' there
We jest yell, an' dance around
Showin' treasures we have found;
Holdin' some new picture high;
Tellin' secrets on th' sly;

Sharin' every prize we get;
Candy, book or cigarette.
Each guy happy with some thought
That a welcome letter brought.
Folks don't seem so far away
When we've had a letter day.
We c'n laugh at distance then,
When we've heard from home again.
Lonesome, homesick, sad or weary,
One thing always makes us cheery —
"Mail, Ho!"

THE OLD DITTY BOX

Old and battered now, it rests
With the spinning wheel and chests,
In the solitude and gloom
Of the dusty attic room.
Tied around with cotton line;
Carved with names in odd design;
Hinges broken; lid askew;
Warped and cracked — but always new!
Dear to me despite its knocks —
Precious durned old ditty box.

When I steal away up stairs,
'Mong the beds and broken chairs,
And I loosen that old lid,
I'm a second Captain Kidd
Hunting for his buried gold —
But no hiding place could hold
Treasures like the ones I find,
And the thoughts they bring to mind;
Dreams of ships and ports and docks —
All from that old ditty box.

When I take the treasures out,
And begin to think about
Cruising days of long ago,

Memories crowd upon me so,
I just wish that every lad
Could have all the fun I've had,
And that they could have, like me,
Golden hours of memory,
When their thoughts, like sheep in flocks,
Would come from a ditty box.

A BALLAD OF THE OLD NAVY

The sea's the place for sailormen in fair or stormy weather;
'Round the world and back again they're all good mates together.

We went ashore on pay day night, Bill Dykes the mate, an' me;
We cruised about till we got tight an' then went on a spree.
We veered an' hauled an' tacked an' beat, an' shifted course some more,
Till we fetched up on Bleecker street, an' steered fer Jersy shore —
An' we wuz ridin' even keel, consid'rin' where we'd been,
Till a pair o' cops put up a deal an' tried t' run us in.
An' Bill, he sez: "'Turn To' has gone, I think I heard 'er blow",
An' he winked at me, an' I wuz on, an' then he sez: "Les'go"!

So Bill, he took th' biggest one, an' 'course I took th' other,
An' s'help me, when th' job wuz done y' couldn't tell one from t'other.

Th' port side light o' one wuz green, an' th' starb'ard showin' red,
An t'other wuz bleedin' in b'tween, an' I thought he wuz dead,
Fer I downed him cold in th' mornin' watch with his wood b'layin' pin;
An' th' top uv his head wuz an awful splotch an' his jaw wuz busted in.
'N then Bill, he sez: "Tis well b'low", an' he cast his weather eye
Aroun' th' street, an' he sez: "Les' go, an' leave the' lubbers die."

Two sailors rolling down the dock, and making heavy weather,
A-hoisted in with tackle and block, and into the brig together.

RED LEAD

You may visit studios
In New York or gay Paree;
Watch the famous models pose;
Study scenes of land or sea.
You may sing the cubist's praises,
Or a portrait's curving lip —
But for art with all its phases,
Watch a deck crew painting ship.

You will never find them stalling
When the paint begins to pour.
Artisans of every calling;
Rookies fresh from haunts ashore
Hustle overside, and swinging
On their creaking stages high,
Work to tunes the gang is singing,
Till they make the red lead fly.

Hieroglyphics and odd creatures;
Birds and faces, curves and lines;
Ancient art with all its features;
Modern art in strange designs
Grace the old hull, till the laughter
Gives the bosun's mate a tip —
And he finds, a moment after,
All hands busy — painting ship.

Dungarees and blouses spattered;
Features standing in relief,
Where the spots of paint are scattered,
Like a decked Apache chief;
Gaunt and silent, wan and bleary,
Daubed and smeared from head to feet
Come the artists, cramped and weary,
When the bugle blows retreat.

There are painters far more clever
Than these artists of the sea,
But the scrawls they make will ever
Cling around my memory,
And their laughter and their yelling,
And the steady slap and dip
Of their brushes, will be telling
How the old gang painted ship.

THE ACE

The all-resplendent, independent,
Dare-devil Ace.
The never-halted, most exalted
Warrior of his race.
A nerveless, swerveless, fighting flyer,
Soaring, dipping through hell-fire;
Double-daring, never caring
For the time or place.

The unremitting, never quitting
Military Ace.
Ever meeting, always greeting
Danger, face to face.
Living, giving all, each day;
Bombing, scouting on his way;
Hope enthralling, till God's calling,
Summons home the Ace.

THE GALLEY

Though time may dim each cherished scene
That I once knew at sea,
And dull each sense which once was keen,
I hope there'll sometimes be
A vision come before my eyes
Until my senses rally,
And catch the smells that used to rise
Above the old ship's galley.

Could fairer feast be set for kings
Than used to greet our eyes?
The range heaped high with luscious things;
The biscuits and the pies;
The soup in caldrons steaming hot;
The golden hot cakes flying;
The coffee bubbling in the pot;
The eggs and bacon frying!

Let others dine in big hotels,
But give me galley fare!
I've paid the price for fancy smells,
And garnished dishes rare;
I've tasted many a costly brew —
But none of them can tally
With some I've eaten with the crew,
From out the old ship's galley.

I've banqueted and dined in state
In wealthy restaurants;
I've waited long and feasted late
In swell bohemian haunts —
But I'd have gladly missed them all
To line up in the alley
With our old gang, and hear mess call,
Outside the old ship's galley.

THE SHIP'S COOK

The gilded thrones of kings may pass;
The magistrate's judicial hall,
The Sultan's court of tinkling brass —
They all may go beyond recall,
But there's one monarch that will stay,
And in his sacred, royal nook
Endure all time, and hold full sway —
And that's his highness — our ship's cook.

From out his spacious, steel-bound cage
Come forth his edicts and commands —
No other ruler of the age
Could issue more obscure demands;
No king could closer guard his gate
Against assassin, thief or crook,
Or be a sterner potentate
Than our respected — galley cook.

But, though he be of royalty,
We know the cook will be our friend —
For what would morning watches be
Without his hand-out at the end?
A trick out on the target raft;
A mid-watch on the old mud hook;
A cold, wet field day, fore and aft —
And we bless, then — the old king cook.

Who hasn't made a quiet trip
To cookie's throne room late at night,
When lights were out aboard the ship,
To get from him some tempting bite?
What would the life up for'rd be —
How different things at sea would look —
If that black coffee weren't so free
From our old pal — the galley cook.

What joy we'd lose at reveille,
If we should fail to hear the sound
Of mess gear dropping, or to see
The heaping dishes passed around —
How dull the routine of the day,
If, from that guarded, regal nook,
No golden morsels came our way;
We'd miss his majesty — the cook.

JACK O' THE DUST

Like a pirate's den of old
With its chests of hoarded gold,
Or the famed Aladdin's cave,
There's a realm beneath the wave
Where a lone sea-going man,
Like a hermit of his clan,
Feasts upon his hidden treasure;
Finds his work, and seeks his pleasure,
Safe from wind and wave and cold,
In the dusty cargo hold.

Walled about by tiers and stacks
Of his wealth, piled high in sacks;
Tons and tons of precious freight
Stowed in box and bag and crate,
Dried fruit, candy, nuts and rice,
With the wafted scent of spice,
And of countless sweets untold,
Floating through the laden hold.
Neither drill nor bugle call
Seems to worry him at all;
In the work-a-day routine
'Round the decks, he's never seen —
But he's always within reach
When it's time to hit the beach!

Though the recluse of the crew,
Known among a chosen few,
We shall hear his praises sung
Till the last ship's cargo's swung —
When we think of happy nights,
Under shedding cargo lights,
In his cozy den below,
Where we heard the soft and low
Muffled music of the screws;
Where we sat to win or lose
In a quiet game, or shared
Simple feasts our host prepared.

THE BLUEJACKET

Beneath his jaunty flat-topped hat,
His head held high; his close-cropped hair
With its clean outline, and under that
The glowing bronze of his neck, laid bare
From the white starred collar of navy blue,
To his full brown throat, and square-cut jaw.
His features stand out clear and true;
His profile, sharp as a keen-edged saw,
Against his weathered coat of tan.
His step is firm, with measured length;
His brawny chest, and the ample span
Of his shoulders tell of harbored strength.
His muscles hard as a Turk's-head knot;
His sinews tense like cords of steel;
His piercing glance may blaze white hot —
Or shine with a light that a friend can feel.

His mirth is fresh as the open sea,
Which conjures all his hopes and fears;
Which seems to mark his destiny,
And measure out his laughs and tears.
He takes his fun and pays the price;
His tastes are plain and his wants are few;
He uses words not over nice —
But his thoughts are clean, and his deeds are true.

Tattooed and calloused; perhaps profane,
And a soldier of fortune now and then;
Steadfast as the links of an anchor chain —
A rough and ready man for men;
He'll bide the night with a poker hand —
Or plunge to his death to save a life.
At sea, in air; on ship or land,
He'll keep his post, with perils rife.
In battle, fierce as a wounded buck,
He plays the game to the ordered end —
Or true to a mate who's lost his luck,
He'll stake his life to help a friend.

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